

Middletown School Readiness Council
12:00 P.M. - 1:30 P.M.
Wednesday, February 20, 2012
Wilbert Snow School
299 Wadsworth St.
Middletown, CT 06457

Members Present: Betsy Morgan, Christine Fahey, Sheila Daniels, Wendy Berlind, Donna Marino, Lisa Golebiewski, Daria Keyes, Alice Torres, Jim Gaudreau, Jerome Long, Liz Fraser, Amy Waterman and Patricia Charles.

I. Welcome & Call to Order: Betsy Morgan called the meeting to order at 12:07. Introductions were made.

II. Announcements: Donna Marino distributed "Parent Supporting Educational Excellence" flyers for the upcoming session. She also reminded the Council of the "People Empowering People" training in Spanish in March. A flyer was circulated for the Keefe-Bruyette Symposium at St. Joseph's College on March 25th, focusing on math and science. The Early Literacy grant has funds to support 20 people from Middletown to attend the "Circle of Security" workshop series at the UConn School of Social Work taking place May 14th through the 17th. Sheila reported that Alice Torres presented an overview of the Early Head Start program to the Board of Education at their February 12th meeting. Amy shared her experience of the February 15th professional day where preschool and kindergarten teachers trained together on early literacy. It was noted that there was a strong positive response from participants and that this should be a first step in an ongoing plan to have preschool and kindergarten teachers work together.

III. Acceptance of the January 23, 2012 School Readiness Council meeting: Susan Macary moved to accept the minutes from the above mentioned date. Donna Marino seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

IV. Financial Report: as of January 31st was distributed, showing an unearned balance of \$15,137. It was noted there is one opening at Middlesex College's campus program. We are on target for spending down the grant.

Allocation of Spaces: for the upcoming year is determined by the number of spaces a community holds as of March of the current year. Any unused spaces may be moved to another community. With that in mind, Town & Country is willing to take on one additional space for their program. Alice Torres moved that the School Readiness Council request one additional space from the State Dept. of Education to place at Town & Country. Wendy Berlind seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Report of Children Served: was distributed and reviewed. Parent fees increased slightly, Care4Kids decreased slightly, and the number of Special Education students being served has

increased. We continue to serve a majority of low income children, but also have a good complement of higher income peers to achieve our goal of integrated classrooms.

V. Coordinator's Report:

Report on Students With No Preschool Experience:

This report is a follow up on last month's report on the current kindergarten cohort's preschool experience. The council asked for a breakdown of the number of children with no preschool experience as defined by the State Dept. of Education. A handout was distributed on the 72 children without a preschool experience; 49 children had no preschool and the remaining had 8 months or less. A brief discussion followed. Barriers to preschool were discussed and an important new barrier this year is the revised and higher fee scale.

Summer Enrichment Program for Entering Kindergartners: Anna Shusterman, a Wesleyan University professor, plans to offer the program, Kickstart, once again at Macdonough School and expand the program by offering it at the Green St. Arts Center to North End children who will be going to Farm Hill School. Anna will be present at kindergarten registration to bring this program to the attention of parents whose children had little or no preschool. Amy noted that the Family Resource Center has applied for a Liberty Bank grant to support this important program.

Middlesex College Preschool: The administration at Middlesex has decided to close their child care programs at the end of this school year due to financial constraints. As noted at last month's School Readiness Council meeting, both sites were just reaccredited. The Council was very sorry to hear this news and wishes the Middlesex director and staff all the best under these difficult circumstances. Their contribution to the community is appreciated. Chris is working closely with a local program to take over the preschool at the Macdonough School site and to open another classroom to replace the college site. She will keep the Council informed as progress is made.

2013 School Readiness Grant RFP: has gone out to local preschool and child care programs with a March 18th deadline. The applications will be distributed at the March 20th Council meeting to Grants Committee members. The Grants Committee will meet on March 27th at noon to review the applications. It was noted that Amy Waterman will replace Maureen Partyka as a member of the Grants Committee. Thanks to Amy for joining this committee.

2013 Quality Enhancement Grant RFP: has been received and will be going out to bid soon. Chris proposed that the Council continue with the current Quality Enhancement work that 1) provides a consultant and coach to the School Readiness providers and 2) operates the Middletown Early Childhood Network. Wendy Berling moved to seek a bid for a consultant/coach at \$18,000 and a project director for the Middletown Early Childhood Network at \$7,380. Liz Fraser seconded. The motion carried. Alice Torres abstained.

State budget: In the governor's proposed budget there is an increase in funding for Community Plans for Early Childhood, Improving Early Literacy, and Parent Trust Fund. Funding is maintained for School Readiness, Child Day Care Centers, Family Resource Centers, and State

Head Start. Funding is eliminated for Even Start. There is a proposal to close access to Care4kids when family income increases to between 50% and 75% of state median income.

Office of Early Childhood: Three summary pages of this newly proposed office that will integrate early childhood programs from SDE, DSS, DPH, DDS and the Board of Regents were distributed. Family Resource Centers are not included in the new office. Staff credential requirements are delayed until 2018 and 2023. Discussion followed. This proposal is outlined in the governor's House Bill 6359. The council submitted testimony to the Education Committee supporting the new office. A bill to raise the age of kindergarten eligibility in CT has been raised. Supporters need to develop a plan to provide preschool for the 10,000 children across the state who would not qualify for kindergarten

CT Voices for Children Summary of the 2013 Budget Proposal's Impact on Early Care and Education: was distributed and reviewed. Discussion followed. Concern about the defunding of Even Start and Family School Connection were noted. Early childhood bills are listed on the Early Childhood Alliance website.

NAEYC Fact Sheet on President Obama's Plan for Early Education: was distributed and discussed. The proposal includes:

- Extend evidence-based voluntary home visiting
- Launch a new Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership through competitive grants to support communities' abilities to expand the availability of Early Head Start and child care providers that can meet high standards of quality for children birth through age three;
- Provide high-quality preschool for every child with a federal-state partnership using a cost-sharing approach with states and requiring states to meet quality benchmarks;
- Encourage full-day kindergarten; and
- Continue to invest in Early Head Start to support a greater share of infants, toddlers and three-year-olds.

One important piece of the proposal is that teachers in community programs must be paid equivalent to public school personnel. This is the first time that we have seen a serious proposal that addresses worthy wages.

Discovery Update: Save the dates for Facilitative Leadership training that will be offered in two sessions this summer – 1) August 6, 7, and 8 and 2) August 14 and 15. Registration details will be forwarded as they are received.

Pre-K - K Alignment Update: A letter from the superintendent has gone out to all preschool programs asking them to contact the school district for incoming children that may present a difficult transition to kindergarten. Lisa shared her experience with this process in the past, however the letter from the superintendent is a first and we are hopeful that program directors will contact the school system so it will be ready to support these children.

Opportunity Knocks Update: Daria noted that monthly committee meetings continue. The Community Wellness Collaborative work is ongoing with a focus on nutrition and fitness. Discussion followed. Monica will continue work on peer support around nutrition and fitness

through the Raising Healthy Eaters program. Susan will facilitate the Health Data Institute that will involve creating a database with the information from the yellow forms of entering kindergarten children.

Early Head Start Update: Alice noted that the program continues to recruit families and distributed postcards and business cards to the council.

Even Start Update: Liz noted that attendance is down due to winter weather and illnesses. She is working diligently to save the program, as the governor's budget proposes to eliminate Even Start, and will be meeting with the Appropriations Committee chairs in March.

VI. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 1:30 P.M., with thanks to those in attendance.

The next meeting of the Middletown School Readiness Council will take place on

Wednesday, March 20, 2013

from

12:00 - 1:30 P.M.

at

Wilbert Snow School

299 Wadsworth St.

Middletown, CT 06457

Respectfully Submitted by:
Sheila C. Daniels